

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 2 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method comprising ~~the steps of:~~

maintaining a database of personal information relating to a consumer, the database associated with at least one domain name and the personal information having been previously provided by the consumer and including an indication of preferred providers identified by the consumer or by prior purchases thereby;

receiving a request initiated by the consumer and transmitted over a global communication network to a system associated with the at least one domain name, wherein the request includes a selected one of the at least one domain name and the selected domain name includes an identification of a subject of the request;

selecting, responsive to the received request initiated by the consumer and based upon the request and the preferred providers in the database, at least one name of at least one provider; and

forwarding the selected at least one name of the at least one provider from said system to said consumer, wherein said consumer is subsequently capable of choosing a provider from the selected at least one provider to communicate therewith.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein the selected said request initiated by the consumer includes a domain name name is associated with a plurality of domain names each of which includes a common domain name element, said domain name identifying goods/services without identifying a specific provider thereof, said common domain name element is in the form INEEDSUBJECT.XXX, where "SUBJECT" is a consumer-selected

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 3 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

subject matter object and "XXX" is a consumer-selected, top-level extension of the domain name.

3. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the global communication network is the Internet.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 2, wherein ~~said step of selecting at least one name~~ further includes ~~the step of~~ using a name linking policy to select the at least one name of the at least one provider while utilizing one or a combination of subject matter information, demographic information and geographic information.

E 1
5. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein ~~the step of~~ forwarding the selected at least one name of the at least one provider further includes ~~the step of~~ providing comparative pricing and availability information about goods and services offered by said at least one provider.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of~~ creating a customized presentation for use by said consumer, said customized presentation containing the selected at least one name of the at least one provider and detailed information about goods and services offered by the at least one provider.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 6, wherein the customized presentation is selected from the group consisting of: web page, Wireless Application Protocol, and other data communication formats.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said consumer-provided personal information relating to the consumer includes personal preferences, payment ~~instructions~~ instructions, and privacy instructions.

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 4 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

9. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of operating,~~ within said system, as an intermediary between said consumer and said chosen provider, wherein the intermediary is associated with the at least one domain name.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein said personal information relating to the consumer includes privacy instructions submitted by the consumer, and the method further comprises enabling the consumer to purchase the goods or services offered by said at least one provider chosen by the consumer, the purchase being in accordance with the privacy instructions submitted by said consumer.

E 1
11. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 10, wherein said privacy instructions ~~includes~~ include instructions to make information, alternatively, freely available, available only when authorized by said consumer, or never available to the chosen provider or third parties.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of ~~Claim 1~~ claim 9, wherein ~~said step of operating as an intermediary~~ further includes ~~the step of enabling~~ said consumer to purchase the goods or services of the chosen provider in accordance with payment instructions submitted by said consumer and stored within said database.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 8, wherein said payment instructions ~~includes~~ include instructions to complete transactions for said consumer in an anonymous manner.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 8, wherein said payment instructions include instructions to complete transactions using a card number of the system and rebill said consumer for said complete transactions.

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 5 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

15. (Original) The method of Claim 13, wherein said instructions include instructions to complete transactions according to a predetermined payment arrangement with said chosen provider.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, wherein ~~said step of operating as an intermediary~~ further includes the steps of tracking and awarding rewards based on transactions made by said consumer.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 9, wherein ~~said steps of operating as an intermediary~~ further includes ~~the steps of tracking and ranking~~ a satisfaction level of said consumer.

18. (Currently Amended) A system comprising:

a database for storing information associated with a consumer, the database associated with a plurality of domain names and the information including an indication of preferred providers identified by the consumer or by prior purchases made thereby; and

a server for receiving a request initiated by said consumer and transmitted over a global communication network, the server associated with the plurality of domain names and the request including a selected one of the plurality of domain names, with the selected domain name including an identification of a subject of the request, said server further including:

a module for selecting, responsive to the received request and based upon said request and said preferred providers stored in the database, at least one name of at least one provider; and

a controller for forwarding the selected at least one name of the at least one provider to said consumer, wherein said consumer is then capable of choosing a provider from the selected at least one provider to communicate and, optionally, complete a business transaction therewith.

19. (Original) The system of Claim 18, wherein the global communications network is the Internet.

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 6 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

20. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 18, wherein said request includes a ~~domain name associated with a plurality of domain names each of which~~ the plurality of domain names includes a common domain name element, and said common domain name element is represented as INEEDSUBJECT.XXX, where "SUBJECT" is a subject matter object and "XXX" is a top-level extension for the domain name.

21. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 18, wherein said module is operable to select the at least one name of the at least one provider using one or a combination of subject matter information, demographic ~~information~~ information, and geographic information associated with said consumer and stored in said database.

E1
22. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 18, wherein said controller is operable to enable said consumer to identify the goods or services offered by said chosen provider, evaluate the goods or services offered by said provider by one or more criteria, and ~~further operable to~~ enable said consumer to purchase the goods or services of the chosen provider.

23. (Original) The system of Claim 22, wherein the one or more criteria includes comparative pricing and availability information regarding goods and services offered by said chosen provider.

24. (Original) The system of Claim 21, wherein the subject matter information is maintained by the system in a database accessible by all domains of the system.

25. (Currently Amended) A method for providing a consumer with a customized presentation containing the names of various providers of goods and services that are selected, said method comprising the steps of:

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 7 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

storing, within an intermediary system, consumer-provided information associated with said consumer;

receiving a request initiated by said consumer and transmitted over a global communication network to said intermediary system, said request being a domain name associated with the intermediary system, with the domain name identifying a subject of the request;

selecting, responsive to the received request and based upon said information associated with said consumer and stored in said intermediary system, at least one name of at least one provider;

forwarding the selected at least one name of the at least one provider within a customized presentation to said consumer, wherein said consumer is then capable of choosing a provider from the selected at least one provider to communicate and, optionally, transact business therewith;

operating, within said intermediary system, as an intermediary between said consumer and said chosen provider; and

updating [[he]] the information associated with the consumer based upon a provider chosen thereby with which to transact business.

26. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 25, wherein ~~said step of operating as an intermediary~~ further includes the steps of:

enabling said consumer to identify the goods or services offered by said chosen provider in accordance with privacy instructions submitted by said consumer and stored within said intermediary system;

enabling said consumer to select for purchase said goods or services of said chosen provider using one or more criteria for same; and

enabling said consumer to purchase said goods or services of the chosen provider in accordance with payment instructions submitted by said consumer and stored within said intermediary system.

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/403,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 8 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

27. (Original) The method of Claim 26, wherein the one or more criteria includes comparative pricing and availability information regarding said goods and services of said chosen provider.

28. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 25, wherein ~~the said request includes a~~ domain ~~name~~ name is associated with a plurality of domain names, each of which includes a common domain name element, and said common domain name element is represented as INEEDSUBJECT.XXX, where "SUBJECT" is a subject matter object and where "XXX" is a top-level extension of the domain name.

29. (Original) The method of Claim 26, wherein said privacy instructions allow the consumer to transact business with the chosen provider in an anonymous manner.

30. (Original) The method of Claim 29, wherein the anonymous manner allows the consumer to transact business with the chosen provider using a payment method of the system and to be rebilled by the system for same.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 25, further comprising ~~the step of~~ tracking and awarding rewards based on transactions made by said consumer.

32. (Original) The method of Claim 25, wherein the global communication network is the Internet.

33. (Original) The method of Claim 25, wherein said customized presentation is selected from the group consisting of: web page, Wireless Application Protocol and other data communication formats.

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 9 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

34. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said request includes a common name identifying goods or services without identifying a particular provider thereof, and ~~said step of selecting~~ at least one name further includes ~~the step of using~~ the common name and a name linking policy to select the at least one name of the at least one provider while utilizing one or a combination of demographic information and geographic information of the consumer.

35. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of storing~~, within said system, information associated with said consumer including at least one of a personal preference, a payment ~~instruction~~ instruction, and a privacy instruction.

E 1
36. (Previously Presented) The system of Claim 18, wherein said module is operable to select the at least one name of the at least one provider using one or a combination of demographic information and geographic information.

37. (Currently Amended) A method[[,]] comprising ~~the steps of~~:
maintaining a database of personal information relating to a consumer, the personal information including a list of at least one preferred provider of goods or services;
receiving a search request initiated by the consumer over a global communications network, the request comprising a domain name identifying a type of goods or services;
identifying, in response to the received search request, one or more providers of the type of goods or services requested based upon the at least one preferred provider;
presenting the one or more providers to the consumer;
enabling the consumer to complete a transaction with a provider from the one or more providers chosen by the consumer; and
updating the list of at least one preferred provider based upon the one or more providers chosen by the consumer to complete the transaction.

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 10 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the personal information in the database relating to the consumer comprises payment instructions provided by the consumer.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the personal information in the database relating to the consumer comprises consumer-provided credit card information of a credit card account of the consumer.

40. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37, wherein the personal information in the database relating to the consumer comprises [[]]a consumer-provided instruction that transactions are to be completed without using payment information relating to the consumer, and that the consumer is to be billed for the transactions separately.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the personal information in the database relating to the consumer comprises a consumer-provided instruction that the identity of the consumer is not to be communicated with the chosen provider in completing the transaction.

42. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37, wherein ~~the step of identifying one or more providers~~ comprises identifying the one or more providers based upon the personal information in the database relating to the consumer.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42, wherein the personal information relating to the consumer includes a name of one or more providers with which the consumer prefers to transact business.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the personal information relating to the consumer includes one of demographic information and geographic information associated with the consumer.

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 11 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

45. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for facilitating a transaction between a consumer and a provider of goods or services over communications network, the apparatus being adapted to:

maintain a database of personal information relating to a consumer;

receive a search request initiated by the consumer over a global communications network, the request identifying a type of goods or services, the search request having a single set of characters forming a plurality of fields, a first field having a common name as between different search requests and a second field identifying the type of goods or services to be searched without specifying a specific provider of goods or services;

E1
identify, responsive only to the search request without additional search information being directly provided by the consumer, one or more providers of the type of goods or services requested, the one or more providers being identified based upon the personal information relating to the consumer in the database;

present the one or more providers to the consumer; and

enable the consumer to complete a transaction with a provider from the one or more providers chosen by the consumer using the personal information in the database.

46. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the personal information in the database relating to the consumer comprises payment instructions provided by the consumer.

47. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the personal information in the database relating to the consumer comprises consumer-provided credit card information of a credit card account of the consumer.

48. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the personal information in the database relating to the consumer comprises a consumer-provided instruction that

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 12 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

transactions are to be completed without using payment information relating to the consumer, and that the consumer is to be billed for the transactions separately.

49. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the personal information in the database relating to the consumer comprises [[]]a consumer-provided instruction that the identity of the consumer is not to be communicated with the chosen provider in completing the transaction.

50. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the one or more providers are identified ~~the identifying comprises identifying the one or more providers~~ based upon the personal information in the database relating to the consumer.

E 1
51. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein the personal information relating to the consumer includes a consumer-provided name of one or more providers with which the consumer prefers to transact business.

52. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein the personal information relating to the consumer includes one of demographic information and geographic information of the consumer.

53. (Currently Amended) A method comprising ~~the steps of:~~
maintaining a database of personal information relating to a consumer;
receiving a request initiated by the consumer and transmitted over a global communication network to a system, said request having a single set of characters forming a plurality of fields, a first field having a common name as between different requests and a second field identifying a type of goods or services without identifying a specific provider thereof;
selecting, responsive only to the received request initiated by the consumer without additional search information being directly provided by the consumer and based upon the

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 13 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

personal information relating thereto in the database, at least one name of at least one provider;
and

forwarding the selected at least one name of the at least one provider from said system to said consumer, wherein said consumer is subsequently capable of choosing a provider from the selected at least one provider to communicate therewith.

54. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 53, wherein the said common domain name element is in the form INEEDSUBJECT.XXX, where "SUBJECT" is a consumer-selected subject matter object and "XXX" is a consumer-selected, top-level extension of the domain name.

E¹
55. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 53, wherein ~~said step of selecting at least one name~~ further includes the step of using a name linking policy to select the at least one name of the at least one provider while utilizing one or a combination of subject matter information, demographic information and geographic information maintained in the database of personal information.

56. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 53, wherein said personal information includes one or more of personal preferences of the consumer towards providers of goods/services, payment instructions and privacy instructions.

57. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 56, wherein said privacy instructions include[[s]] instructions to make information, alternatively, freely available, available only when authorized by said consumer, or never available to the chosen provider or third parties.

58. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 56, wherein said payment instructions include[[s]] instructions to complete transactions for said consumer in an anonymous manner.

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 14 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

59. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 56, wherein said payment instructions include instructions to complete transactions using a card number of the system and to rebill said consumer for said complete transactions.

60. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 56, wherein said payment instructions include instructions to complete transactions according to a predetermined payment arrangement with said chosen provider.

61. (Previously Presented) A system comprising:

a database for storing information associated with a consumer;

E¹
a server for receiving a request initiated by said consumer and transmitted over a global communication network, the request comprising a single set of characters representative of typed text, the typed text including a first field having a common name as between different requests and a second field for identifying at least one type of goods or services without identifying a specific provider thereof, said server further including:

a module for selecting, responsive to the received request without additional information directly provided by the consumer and based upon personal information relating to the consumer in the database, at least one name of at least one provider; and

a controller for forwarding the selected at least one name of the at least one provider to said consumer, wherein said consumer is thereafter enabled to choose a provider from the selected at least one provider to communicate and selectively complete a transaction therewith.

62. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 61, wherein the said common domain name element is in the form INEEDSUBJECT.XXX, where "SUBJECT" is a consumer-selected subject matter object and "XXX" is a consumer-selected, top-level extension of the domain name.

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 15 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

63. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 61, wherein said module includes a name linking policy to select the at least one name of the at least one provider while utilizing one or a combination of subject matter information, demographic information and geographic information maintained in the database of personal information.

64. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 61, wherein said personal information includes one or more of personal preferences of the consumer towards providers of goods/services, payment instructions and privacy instructions.

E 1
65. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 64, wherein said privacy instructions include[[s]] instructions to make information, alternatively, freely available, available only when authorized by said consumer, or never available to the chosen provider or third parties.

66. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 64, wherein said payment instructions include[[s]] instructions to complete transactions for said consumer in an anonymous manner.

67. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 64, wherein said payment instructions include instructions to complete transactions using a card number of the system and to rebill said consumer for said complete transactions.

68. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 64, wherein said payment instructions include instructions to complete transactions according to a predetermined payment arrangement with said chosen provider.

69. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of receiving a request involves receiving ~~receives~~ the request from any one of the following: a [[]]desktop device capable of communicating information, and a hand-held device capable of communicating information.

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 16 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

70. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 18, wherein the server is capable of receiving the request from any of the following: a desktop device capable of communicating information, and a hand-held device capable of communicating information.

71. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37, wherein ~~the step of receiving a search request involves receiving~~ receives the request from any one of the following: a desktop device capable of communicating information, and a hand-held device capable of communicating information.

E 1
72. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the apparatus is capable of receiving the request from any one of the following: a desktop device capable of communicating information, a hand-held device capable of communicating information, and a vehicle based device.

73. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising updating the personal information relating to the consumer in the database so that the indication of preferred providers ~~are updated~~ is updated to reflect the consumer choosing a provider from the selected at least one provider to communicate therewith.

74. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 73, wherein ~~the step of updating the personal information involves~~ automatically updates updating the personal information relating to the consumer in the database so that the indication of preferred providers ~~are updated~~ is updated to reflect the consumer choosing a provider from the selected at least one provider to communicate therewith.

75. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 18, wherein the system automatically updates the information associated with the consumer and stored in the database so that the

Applicant : John R. Eckel, Jr.
Serial No. : 09/405,807
Filed : September 24, 1999
Page : 17 of 26

Attorney's Docket No.: 17284-002001

indication of preferred providers are updated is updated to reflect the consumer choosing a provider from the selected at least one provider with which to complete a transaction.

76. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 45, wherein the personal information relating to the consumer maintained in the database [[is]] includes a list of a plurality of consumer-provided names of one or more providers with which the consumer prefers to transact business, and the list is updated to reflect the consumer completing a transaction with the provider chosen by the consumer.

E¹
77. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of ~~claim 75~~ claim 76, wherein the list is automatically updated to reflect the consumer completing a transaction with the provider chosen by the consumer.

78. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 53, further comprising updating the database of personal information for subsequent selections of at least one provider [[s]], based upon the provider chosen by the consumer with which to ~~communicate~~, communicate.

79. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 61, wherein the information associated with the consumer is automatically updated for subsequent selections by the module, based upon the provider chosen by the ~~consume~~ consumer with which to complete a transaction.

E²
80. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the subsequent communication by the consumer comprises completing a transaction with the selected at least one provider using data stored in the database of personal information.